

Parliament
of Victoria

Code of Conduct

for Parliamentary Electorate
Officers (no.7)

November 2022



Responsiveness



Integrity



Impartiality



Accountability



Respect

Table of Contents

Code of Conduct for Parliamentary Electorate Officers (No 7) 2022	3
i. Presiding Officers' foreword	4
ii. The Electorate Officers Values	6
Introduction.....	7
1.1 A binding Code of Conduct	7
1.2 Purpose of the Code	7
1.3 Pre-employment	7
1.4 Volunteers	7
1.5 Other available guidance.....	7
1.6 Breach of this Code	8
Demonstrating Responsiveness.....	9
2.1 Advising the Member of Parliament.....	9
2.2 Services to the community	9
2.3 Contributing to improvements	9
Demonstrating Integrity.....	10
3.1 Honesty at work.....	10
3.2 Financial probity.....	10
3.3 Official information.....	10
3.4 Reporting unethical behaviour	11
3.5 Conflict of interest	11
3.6 Other employment	11
3.7 Public trust.....	12
3.8 Criminal offences	12
3.9 Drugs and alcohol	12
Demonstrating Impartiality	13
4.1 Heading Decisions and advice.....	13
4.2 Gifts and benefits.....	13
4.3 Acting fairly	13
Demonstrating Accountability.....	14
5.1 Working to clear objectives.....	14
5.2 Being responsible for decisions/actions	14
5.3 Work resources	14
5.4 Open to scrutiny	15
5.5 Ability to meet essential requirements.....	15
5.6 Compliance with legislation.....	15
5.7 Compliance with policies and procedures	15
Demonstrating Respect.....	16
6.1 Fair and objective treatment.....	16
6.2 Privacy and confidentiality.....	16
6.3 Maintaining confidentiality.....	16
6.4 Equity and diversity	16
6.5 Improving outcomes	17

Code of Conduct for Parliamentary Electorate Officers (No 7) 2022

The Code of Conduct for Parliamentary Electorate Officers (the Code) has been developed generally consistent with the Parliamentary officer values contained in section 5 of the *Parliamentary Administration Act 2005* (the Act). Although Parliamentary electorate officers are not specifically covered by the Act, the Presiding Officers believe that the values outlined in the Act equally apply to the work performed by Parliamentary electorate officers. As such, the Presiding Officers have incorporated these values into the Code. The purpose of the Code is to promote adherence to these values.

The Code and the values contained within the Code form part of each Parliamentary electorate officers terms and conditions of employment. The Code is binding on all Parliamentary electorate officers and a contravention of the Code is capable of constituting misconduct.

In this Code a reference to "the Presiding Officers" is also a reference to the Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services as the delegate of the Presiding Officers.

1. Name of Code

This Code is the Code of Conduct for Victorian Parliamentary electorate officers (No.7) 2022.

2. Purpose

This Code is issued to promote adherence to the values contained in the *Parliamentary Administration Act 2005* by employees of the Presiding Officers.

3. Commencement

This Code commenced on 1 July 2008. It was re-issued on 19 November 2012, April 2014, December 2014, March 2017 and January 2019. This version (no. 7) is issued in November 2022.

4. Application

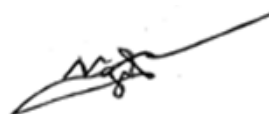
This Code applies to and is binding on all Victorian Parliamentary electorate officers employed under section 30 of the *Parliamentary Administration Act 2005*.

5. Declaration

We approve and issue the attached Code.



Hon. Maree Edwards
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
November 2022



Hon. Nazih Elasmr
President
Legislative Council
November 2022

i. Presiding Officers' foreword

This Code of Conduct has been prepared as a guide to help electorate officers better understand the expectations and requirements placed on them as they undertake their work. An understanding of and demonstrable adherence to the behaviours and values in this Code is vitally important to the important work of electorate officers.

Electorate officers play a critical role in the effective functioning of the institution of Parliament, and are a crucial support to the supervising Member of Parliament. Section 30 of the **Parliamentary Administration Act 2005** establishes that all electorate officers are directly employed by the Presiding Officers namely the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the President of the Legislative Council. To ensure all employer accountabilities and administration matters are managed, we have delegated the administration of your employment to the Secretary, DPS.

In addition, Section 30 is also specific in detailing the types of work which are not permitted for electorate officers to undertake, stating explicitly that an electorate officer must not perform any party specific activities.

For the sake of clarity, party specific activity is defined in this relevant legislation as:

“any activity for the dominant purpose of directing how a person should vote at an election, by promoting or opposing— (a) the election of any candidate at the election; or (b) a registered political party; or (c) an elected member”.

Bearing in mind the clearly established requirements of your employment, it is nevertheless important for you to remember that the position of an electorate officer is to work for and provide support to the supervising Member of Parliament. To be effective in your role requires a high degree of trust, integrity and confidentiality. Confidentiality is also a key requirement when interacting with constituents and visitors to the office or in the community.

Your actions as an electorate officer will shape the way constituents and the wider community perceive their elected Member and we want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the important role you perform for the Victorian community.

This Code seeks to reinforce and protect a number of key attributes, values and behaviours for electorate officers, including **Responsiveness, Integrity, Impartiality, Accountability** and **Respect**. We hope that these values will guide you in your work, and that you will return to them when faced with situations which may require you to exercise your judgement and initiative.

We note that the value of **Integrity** is a fundamental principle outlined within this Code and should be a core consideration in everything you do as an electorate officer, remembering that public trust is hard won and easily undermined. As an electorate officer, you must be open and transparent in your dealings and report any and all improper conduct you encounter.

We note that over these past few years, society has undergone significant change, with external factors including the COVID19 pandemic, necessitating a large degree of adaptation and flexibility. Be assured that the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) are here to provide support to you.

Please ensure you read and become familiar with this Code of Conduct and note that in the absence of a detailed rule for every situation, you should endeavour to remember and reflect the guiding values and principles of behaviour that this Code intends to reflect.

Looking ahead to the 60th Parliament, this Code of Conduct will also be subject to update and review. As part of that process, your feedback will be sought, and we look forward to your contribution to that discussion on how the Code could be improved.

We welcome you as a valued contributor to the work of the Parliament of Victoria.

ii. The Electorate Officers Values

The Code is built on the following values, which form part of this Code of Conduct. The Values are to be read taking into account the fact that Parliamentary electorate officers are directly accountable and responsible to the Member of Parliament in whose electorate they are employed.

Responsiveness - Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate responsiveness by -

1. providing frank and timely advice to the Member of Parliament to whom they serve;
2. providing high quality services to the Victorian community; and
3. identifying and promoting best practice in the operation of their electorate officer duties.

Integrity- Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate integrity by-

1. being honest, open and transparent in their dealings; and
2. reporting improper conduct; and
3. avoiding any real or apparent conflicts of interest; and
4. striving to earn and sustain public trust of a high level.

Impartiality- Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate impartiality by-

1. making decisions and providing advice on merit and without bias, caprice, favouritism or self-interest; and
2. acting fairly by objectively considering all relevant facts and fair criteria.

Accountability- Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate accountability by -

1. working to clear objectives in a transparent manner; and
2. accepting responsibility for their decisions and actions; and
3. seeking to achieve best use of resources; and
4. submitting themselves to appropriate scrutiny.

Respect- Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate respect for colleagues, officers and Members of the Parliament and members of the Victorian community by -

1. treating them fairly and objectively;
2. ensuring freedom from discrimination, harassment and bullying; and
3. using their views to improve outcomes on an ongoing basis.

Introduction

1.1 A binding Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct prescribes the behaviour expected of Parliamentary electorate officers.

Parliamentary electorate officers are required to familiarise themselves and act in accordance with the Code. The Code is binding on all Parliamentary electorate officers employed under section 30 of the Act and a contravention of it may constitute misconduct.

1.2 Purpose of the Code

The purpose of the Code is to promote adherence to the values. This Code prescribes standards of required behaviour rather than detailed policies and procedures.

The Presiding Officers may develop and implement policies and procedures tailored to their own operating environment to support the application of the Code. Parliamentary electorate officers are required to comply with these policies and procedures.

The Code is designed to help Parliamentary electorate officers understand the responsibilities and obligations of working as a parliamentary electorate officer. The behaviours described in the Code are essential in each parliamentary electorate officer's relationship with Members of the Parliament, the community and other Parliamentary electorate officers.

1.3 Pre-employment

The Code can only bind Parliamentary electorate officers from the commencement of their employment. However, Presiding Officers may establish policies and procedures that include provisions for dealing with false, incorrect or misleading information provided in relation to applications for employment.

1.4 Volunteers

Volunteers are required to comply with this Code of Conduct and relevant policies and procedures, where the volunteers:

- undertake work that is of a similar nature to the work undertaken by Parliamentary electorate officers at a premises or location generally regarded as a parliamentary electorate officer's workplace
- use or have access to parliamentary resources or information that are not normally accessible or available to the public

1.5 Other available guidance

In addition to conduct prescribed in this Code, there may be specific issues which are covered by other legislation, an industrial agreement or award, or a policy or

procedure set down by the Presiding Officers, or by some other relevant authority. Parliamentary electorate officers who are unsure of the appropriate action to take in a particular situation should seek advice from their Member of Parliament and/or Presiding Officers.

1.6 Breach of this Code

This Code relates to both performance and conduct behaviours. The Code, and the values contained within the Code, is provided with every parliamentary electorate officer's contract of employment to ensure they are aware of the values and behaviours expected of the position.

Failure to behave in the ways described in the Code may lead to action under relevant performance management or misconduct processes.

Demonstrating Responsiveness



Responsiveness

Responsiveness – Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate responsiveness by –

1. providing frank and timely advice to the Member of Parliament to whom they serve;
2. providing high quality services to the Victorian community; and
3. identifying and promoting best practice in the operation of their electorate officer duties.

2.1 Advising the Member of Parliament

Parliamentary electorate officers provide a high standard of advice to the Member of Parliament whom they serve. Advice is provided in a frank and timely manner. Parliamentary electorate officers do not withhold relevant information from the Member of Parliament and/or the Presiding Officers if and when required.

2.2 Services to the community

Parliamentary electorate officers provide services to the community in an equitable, prompt and professional manner at all times. They demonstrate community leadership to members of the public when representing their Member of Parliament. Parliamentary electorate officers act within the level of their authority and in accordance with any relevant policies.

2.3 Contributing to improvements

Parliamentary electorate officers are committed to continuous improvement and adopt a best practice approach to the performance of their work. They identify and actively promote appropriate strategies, methods and processes that lead to improved performance.

Demonstrating Integrity



Integrity

Integrity- Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate integrity by-

1. being honest, open and transparent in their dealings; and
2. reporting improper conduct; and
3. avoiding any real or apparent conflicts of interest; and
4. striving to earn and sustain public trust of a high level.

3.1 Honesty at work

Parliamentary electorate officers act honestly in the performance of their duties. They are open and transparent when making decisions. They give honest advice based on available facts and data. They ensure their advice is up to date.

Parliamentary electorate officers do not use their position to provide a private benefit to themselves, their family, friends or associates. They perform their role in a way that is fair and reasonable and family or other personal relationships do not improperly influence their decisions. They respect the rights and dignity of those affected by their decisions and actions.

3.2 Financial probity

Parliamentary electorate officers observe the highest standards of integrity in financial matters and comply with the requirements of relevant financial management legislation, policies and procedures. They maintain a strict separation between work-related and personal financial matters and only use, or authorise the use of public financial resources or facilities for work-related purposes.

3.3 Official information

Parliamentary electorate officers with access to official information ensure it is only used for official purposes and in an approved manner. Official and personal information is handled according to relevant legislation and any relevant policies and procedures.

Parliamentary electorate officers only disclose official information or documents acquired in the course of their employment when required to do so by law, in the legitimate course of duty, when called to give evidence in court, or when proper authority has been given. In such cases comments are confined to factual information only.

3.4 Reporting unethical behaviour

Parliamentary electorate officers comply with legislation, policies and lawful instructions in the performance of their work. Parliamentary electorate officers report to their Member of Parliament and/or the Presiding Officers workplace behaviour that violates any law, rule or regulation or represents corrupt conduct, mismanagement of public resources, or is a danger to public health or safety.

3.5 Conflict of interest

Parliamentary electorate officers declare and avoid conflicts of interest to help maintain community trust and confidence.

A conflict of interest can be actual, potential or perceived. This relates to circumstances where the employee is or could be directly influenced or where it is perceived the employee might be influenced.

Parliamentary electorate officers ensure their personal or financial interests do not influence and could not be perceived to influence their performance in their job. They should seek to ensure the interests of family members, friends or associates do not influence or could be perceived to influence their performance in their job.

If an employee is unsure about a possible conflict of interest they should seek advice from their Member of Parliament and/or the Presiding Officers.

3.6 Other employment

Parliamentary electorate officers only engage in other employment where the activity does not conflict with their role as a Parliamentary electorate officer. Employment includes a second job, conducting a business, trade or profession, or active involvement with other organisations (paid employment or voluntary work). The Member of Parliament and/or the Presiding Officers can assist to determine if such activities will cause an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Parliamentary electorate officers are required to seek approval to engage in any other paid employment from the Member of Parliament whom they serve. Parliamentary electorate officers must comply with any policies issued by the Presiding Officers in relation to engaging in other employment.

3.7 Public trust

Parliamentary electorate officers seek to build and maintain a high level of trust with Members of the Parliament, the community and other Parliamentary electorate officers. They behave in a manner that does not bring themselves or Members of the Parliament into disrepute.

Parliamentary electorate officers avoid conduct in their private life that may adversely affect their standing as a representative of the community or which may bring Members of the Parliament and/or the Presiding Officers into disrepute.

3.8 Criminal offences

Parliamentary electorate officers advise their Member of Parliament and/or Presiding Officers if they are charged with a criminal offence, which is punishable by imprisonment or, if found guilty, could reasonably be seen to affect their ability to meet the inherent requirements of the work they are engaged to perform.

Parliamentary electorate officers also advise their Member of Parliament if they engage in conduct which may bring their Member of Parliament into disrepute.

3.9 Drugs and alcohol

Parliamentary electorate officers carry out their work safely and avoid conduct that puts themselves or others at risk. This includes the misuse of alcohol, drugs or other substances when at work or when engaged in work related activities.

The misuse of alcohol, prescribed drugs, illegal drugs and other substances is an issue for both employers and employees as it impacts on both work and personal life and in some cases the reputation of Members of the Parliament.

Parliamentary electorate officers who are on medication that could affect their work performance or the safety of themselves or others inform their Member of Parliament and/or the Presiding Officers to ensure any necessary precautions or adjustments to work can be put in place.

Demonstrating Impartiality



Impartiality

Impartiality- Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate impartiality by-

1. making decisions and providing advice on merit and without bias, caprice, favouritism or self-interest; and
2. acting fairly by objectively considering all relevant facts and fair criteria.

4.1 Decisions and advice

Parliamentary electorate officers make decisions and provide advice that is free of prejudice or favouritism and is based on sound judgement. Their decisions are not affected by personal influences.

4.2 Gifts and benefits

Parliamentary electorate officers do not, for themselves or others seek or accept gifts or benefits that could be reasonably perceived as influencing them.

Parliamentary electorate officers comply with any policies of the Presiding Officers in relation to accepting, declaring and/or recording the receipt of gifts or benefits.

Parliamentary electorate officers who are unsure about accepting a gift or benefit seek advice from their Member of Parliament and/or the Presiding Officers.

4.3 Acting fairly

Parliamentary electorate officers deal with issues consistently, fairly and in a timely manner. Parliamentary electorate officers use fair criteria, and consider all relevant information in dealing with issues.

Being fair means being just and working within commonly accepted rules.

Demonstrating Accountability



Accountability – Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate accountability by-

Accountability

1. working to clear objectives in a transparent manner; and
2. accepting responsibility for their decisions and actions; and
3. seeking to achieve best use of resources; and
4. submitting themselves to appropriate scrutiny.

5.1 Working to clear objectives

Parliamentary electorate officers understand the objectives of their role. Employees who are unclear about their goals discuss this with their Member of Parliament and/or the Presiding Officers.

5.2 Being responsible for decisions/actions

Parliamentary electorate officers make decisions and take actions within the scope of their authority that are lawful and consistent with relevant legislation and policies.

5.3 Work resources

Parliamentary electorate officers use work resources and equipment efficiently and only for appropriate purposes as authorised by the employer. This includes refraining from engaging in party specific activities in the course of employment.

Parliamentary electorate officers seek to achieve value for money and use resources in the most effective way possible. They identify opportunities for improvement to achieve best possible efficiency and responsiveness.

Work resources include physical, financial, technological and intellectual property. Intellectual Property includes copyright, trade marks, registered designs, patents and all other proprietary rights and any rights to registration of such rights, including proprietary rights developed or created by employees in the course of their employment.

The Presiding Officers retain ownership of all these work resources.

5.4 Open to scrutiny

Parliamentary electorate officers maintain accurate and reliable records as required by relevant legislation, policies and procedures and instructions as determined by the Presiding Officers. Records are kept in such a way as to ensure their security and reliability and are made available to appropriate scrutiny when required, including inspections by the Auditor-General.

5.5 Ability to meet essential requirements

Parliamentary electorate officers notify the Member of Parliament whom they serve and/or the Presiding Officers of any loss, suspension of, or change to, a registration, accreditation, licence or other qualification that affects their ability to meet relevant essential requirements or to perform their duties.

5.6 Compliance with legislation

Parliamentary electorate officers ensure they are aware of and comply with all legislation relevant to the performance of their duties.

5.7 Compliance with policies and procedures

Parliamentary electorate officers ensure they are aware of and comply with all policies and procedures developed by the Presiding Officers relevant to the performance of their duties.

Demonstrating Respect



Respect

Respect – Parliamentary electorate officers should demonstrate respect for colleagues, officers and Members of the Parliament and members of the Victorian community by-

1. treating them fairly and objectively;
2. ensuring freedom from discrimination, harassment and bullying; and
3. using their views to improve outcomes on an ongoing basis.

6.1 Fair and objective treatment

Parliamentary electorate officers promote an environment that encourages respect.

Parliamentary electorate officers are fair, objective and courteous in their dealings with Members of Parliament, the community and other Parliamentary electorate officers.

6.2 Privacy and confidentiality

Parliamentary electorate officers understand the importance of privacy and confidentiality. Confidential information requires special treatment and protection. Those people who provide confidential information to Parliamentary electorate officers have the right to expect this information to be treated as confidential. Parliamentary electorate officers with access to confidential information ensure it remains confidential and at all times act in accordance with legislation and policies relating to dealing with private information.

6.3 Maintaining confidentiality

Parliamentary electorate officers receive and manage information in such a manner that its confidentiality will be maintained and that it will not be used to advantage a prospective employer or business.

6.4 Equity and diversity

Parliamentary electorate officers follow the spirit as well as the letter of laws relating to discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.

Parliamentary electorate officers create an environment that is free of discrimination, harassment and bullying to the best of their ability.

Valuing and promoting diversity is an important element of demonstrating respect.

6.5 Improving outcomes

Parliamentary electorate officers are conscientious and efficient in their work. They use their knowledge and expertise to deliver high quality service, as well as identifying opportunities to improve service outcomes.

Parliamentary electorate officers contribute both individually and as part of a team and engage constructively with their colleagues on work related matters. They share information with team members to support delivery of the best and most appropriate service outcomes.